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"My Country, 'tis of Thee."

DOCTOR AND MRS. SMITH AT HOME.

"MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE"

AND

THE LATEST POEMS

OF

REV. SAMUEL FRANCIS SMITH, D.D.

THE PEOPLE'S LAUREATE,

BY

REV. GEORGE C. LORIMER, D.D.

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A TRIBUTE

TO

OUR HONORARY MEMBER

REV. SAMUEL FRANCIS SMITH, D.D.

FROM THE

YOUNG MEN'S BAPTIST SOCIAL UNION

OF

BOSTON, MASS.

Introduction.

At a meeting of the directors of the Young Men's Baptist Social Union of this city, held Nov. 25. 1895, the undersigned were appointed a committee to prepare a memorial in honor of the late Rev. Samuel Francis Smith, D.D., who at the time of his death was the first and only honorary member of the Union. The memorial to contain a brief sketch of Dr. Smith's life, together with "America," the six hymns written by him expressly for the Union, and the "People's Laureate," written by Rev. George C. Lorimer, D.D. Every one who knew the author of our national hymn, knew him to love him. His words, which seem to be almost the words of inspiration, have made their national imprint. It is in view of the fact that Dr. Smith belonged, not simply to New England, the place of his nativity, but to our nation, that this little booklet is published. May the words of our patriot-poet inspire every true American citizen to a higher, truer, and nobler life.

George W. Coleman,
Robert A. Barbour,
Frank E. H. Gary,
} *Committee.*

Rev. Samuel Francis Smith, D.D.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

"My Country, 'tis of Thee." The author of this remarkable hymn, Rev. Samuel Francis Smith, D.D., was born in Boston, Mass., October 21st, 1808, and died in the same city, November 16th, 1895, having reached the advanced age of eighty-seven years. Dr. Smith was prepared for college in the Boston Latin School, receiving the "Franklin Medal" at the end of his course. He entered Harvard University in 1826, graduating in the class of 1829, among his classmates being the late Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. He afterwards entered the Andover Theological Seminary, where he graduated at the age of twenty-four. Just after leaving the seminary he was engaged in editorial work for about one year. At the age of twenty-six he accepted a call to the First Baptist Church at Waterville, Maine. At the same time he accepted the professorship of modern languages in Waterville College, now Colby University. It was during his early stay in Waterville that he was married to Miss Mary White Smith, who survives him.

Dr. Smith held the two positions of pastor and professor for a period of about eight years. He then removed to Newton Centre, Mass., and became editor of the *Christian Review*, and pastor of the First Baptist Church of that place. His editorial duties continued for a period of seven years, and that of pastor for about twelve years. At the expiration of his pastorate he was elected editorial secretary of the Missionary Union, which position he held for fifteen years. These were years full of consecrated service and Christian activity. Whatever duty he undertook to perform, he performed it to the best of his ability, supported by a ripe Christian experience, and a true scholar's instinct.

He visited Europe twice, once in 1875, and again five years later, in 1880, his wife accompanying him upon both occasions. It was in 1880 that he travelled extensively in the East, visiting many of the most important missionary stations. Dr. Smith was not only a preacher of marked ability, but a scholar and a poet. His gift as a linguist was almost phenomenal. At the age of eighty-five he was engaged in the study of the Russian language, in order better to understand and sympathize with the oppressed of that country. Quite a portion of the later part of his life he devoted to the acquisition of some new language; and it has been stated upon good authority that at the time of his death he could read readily twelve to fifteen different languages. He was also a close and critical student in many other and varied

departments of learning. As a poet we have had many beautiful productions from his pen, his thought oftentimes taking form in rhyme of a patriotic and Christian character. Many are the beautiful hymns which he has given to the world; they will stand as a monument to his memory; among them might be mentioned the old and familiar hymn, "The Morning Light is Breaking."

In 1843 he published (with Dr. Baron Stowe) "The Psalmist;" in 1844, a volume of Lyric Poems; and in 1895, Poems of "Home and Country." His best known production, however, is that hymn so near and dear to every true American heart, "My Country, 'tis of Thee." The circumstances under which he wrote "America" can be best described by using the Doctor's own words, which appeared in the *Baptist Union* in 1894. In referring to the history of this old hymn he says, "The author was then a student of theology in his last year at Andover, Mass. The hymn was written in a leisure hour, just before sunset, and with other songs was given some weeks later to Mr. Lowell Mason. Mr. Mason was at that time the leader and instructor of a children's chorus in Boston. On the following Fourth of July, Mr. Mason made this hymn a part of his programme for the children's celebration in the Park Street Church. Soon after, singing in the public schools was everywhere introduced; with these exercises, "America" found its way to the front, and its patriotic words at once became popular. The hymn has gone around the

world, and now, after sixty years, seems nearer to the public heart than ever."

"Thy strong, sweet song, Thy noble theme
Through all the land shall ring,
Long as the nation lives to chant
'Save us, Great God, our King.'

Poet and Preacher, Teacher, Friend, —
Thy psalm of liberty
Hath filled our hearts, our homes, our lives,
With sweetest harmony."

These words of Mrs. M. A. Buckman beautifully express the sentiment of every true American heart.

Dr. Smith was loved by the young as well as the old. He won his way into the affectionate regard of every true and loyal heart. Whatever was of interest to them was also of interest to him. He was made an honorary member of the Young Men's Baptist Social Union in 1895; and up to the time of his death he had attended all but one of the semi-annual "Ladies' Nights" of the Union, either as its honored guest, or as an honorary member, and he also contributed the six original hymns which appear in this little booklet.

Citizen, patriot, scholar, poet, follower of Christ, 'tis true that we shall no longer see thee with mortal eye. Like the close of a beautiful autumnal day, as sinks the sun over the distant hills only to usher a beautiful morning into some distant land, so closes this life to us here below, only to be renewed in an immortal life in the beautiful land beyond. The poet, scholar, sci-

entist, and historian may appear upon the "world's broad stage," live their brief day and generation, pass on and be forgotten. The work of the artist may fade upon the canvas, the work of the sculptor may crumble into dust, generations may pass into oblivion or live only in a few brief pages of history: yet so long as the American nation shall stand, the words "My Country, 'tis of Thee," will live, and be sung by the countless millions of future generations.

Loved and honored, poet-patriot, we cannot, we will not, say farewell; for thou dost live. How appropriate for the close of a true, noble, patriotic, and consecrated life are the words of our brother when he so beautifully sang, —

"O Rock of Ages! when in death
My strength grows weak, my spirits fail,
And earthly helpers leave my feet
To tread alone the solemn vale,
Then from each cliff and slope and crag
Let light from heaven reflected shine;
Christ is earth's sun, and Christ alone
Can gild the tomb with rays divine.

As clings the seaman, when his bark
Is shattered by the raging wave,
To fragments of the broken wreck,
And vainly hopes his life to save, —
So in all times of risk and need,
My spirit to Thy shade shall flee,
Secure, in life or death, to find,
O Rock of Ages! all in Thee."

Yours sincerely, S. F. Smith.

America.

My country, – 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring.

My native country, - thee,
Land of the noble, free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake,
Let all that breathe partake,
Let rocks their silence break,—
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, our King.

Columbus.

Tune, "America."

Westward, brave seaman, sail,
Pressed on by every gale;
  God is thy guide!
Westward, and nothing fear,
Westward, thy pathway steer,
Till some fair land appear
  Beyond the tide.

Day and night went and came,
Led by God's pillar'd flame, —
  All sails unfurled:
The sailor trod the deck,
Fearless of storm or wreck,
When rose a distant speck,
  Lo! the new world.

God of the sea and land,
We trace Thy glorious hand,
  We own Thy power.
Here set Thy rightful throne,
Make the new world Thine own,
Rule its expanse alone,
  Forever more.

October 17, 1892.

Martha and Mary.

Tune, "America."

Cumbered with earthly care,
Her lot, to do and bear,
To watch and wait;
Martha, with tender thought,
Her loving service brought,
It was for Christ she wrought
Early and late.

Mary, — ah, place most sweet,
Low at the Saviour's feet,
Hung on His word;
Hers, but in love sincere,
Waiting His voice to hear,
With meek and holy fear,
Beside her Lord.

Be ours the bliss to sit,
Waiting at Jesus' feet, —
The twain in one, —
Whether we hear or do,
With patient hearts and true,
To toil, and listen, too,
To Him alone.

October 16, 1893.

Hymn.

Tune, "Duke Street."

As ocean with majestic roar
Rolls its white billows to the shore,
Our praise, Lord, like the sounding sea,
Shall break in ceaseless waves to Thee.

The rippling stream, the whispering leaves,
The gorgeous forms which sunset weaves,
The thunder's crash, the lightning's flame,
Thy presence and Thy power proclaim.

Each sunny ray, each sparkling star,
Glows with His wondrous name afar,
And all our throbbing pulses tell
Of Him whose love does all things well.

Just as the lark with quivering wings
Soars, and still soars, and, soaring, sings,
Breathe with each breath the Saviour's praise,
Extol His name in loftiest lays.

His mercy every blessing brings,
Crown Him with glory, King of kings:
Before His throne, adoring, fall,
And crown the Saviour Lord of all.

October 15, 1894.

Missionary Hymn.

Tune, "Antioch."

Speed on Thy victory, mighty King, —
The world awaits Thy call, —
Swiftly Thy glorious kingdom bring,
And reign Thou, Lord of all.

All things are Thine, the earth we tread
The stars, the sky, the sea;
And we are in Thy image made,
Our all belongs to Thee.

So, conquering Prince, o'er all the world
Bid sin and tumult cease,
And Thy blest banner float, unfurled,
Above a world at peace.

Gather fresh crowns, of priceless worth,
Triumphant Saviour, Thou;
Till the fair crown of all the earth
Shall glitter on Thy brow.

March 19, 1895.

Hymn.

Tune, "Lyons."

Extol ye Jehovah. His glory proclaim:
Our shield and defender, sing praise to His name.
His life is our life, and we lean on His arm,
His presence to life gives its holiest charm.

We find in His service our noblest employ,
To do His blest will is our aim and our joy;
No bliss like the bliss by His hand to be led,
No crown like the crown that honors His head.

We wait for His summons, we bow to His word,
Our Master, our Saviour, our Teacher, our Lord;
We love Thy dear footsteps, we walk in Thy fear,
Speak, Lord, to our hearts, and Thy servants shall hear.

Accept Thou the gift which we lay at Thy feet;
For grace we implore, for strength we entreat;
So life, be it longer or shorter, shall be
A life full of service, dear Saviour, for Thee.

October 21, 1895.

Written for the Young Men's Baptist Social Union, September 1895, and adopted as the

Union Hymn.

Hail! happy scene of feast and song!
How sweet the minutes roll,
When heart to beating heart responds,
And soul to kindred soul.
Love rules the hour, true Christian love,
A force divinely given,
The foretaste of immortal bliss,
The antepast of heaven.

And who shall be our honored guest,
With grace to crown the board,
Who, sit, the Master of the feast,
Who, but our glorious Lord?
Bring near, with joy, the costly vase,
And break it, — 'tis but meet. —
And pour the precious ointment forth,
To bathe His sacred feet.

Thus the rich banquet, fitly spread,
Shall prove a feast indeed;
And living bread from His own hand
Our waiting souls shall feed:
The King of kings and Lord of lords
No royal gift shall spare,
And manna, of our earthly board,
Be changed to angels' fare.

The People's Laureate.

BY

REV. GEORGE C. LORIMER, D.D.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO REV. S. F. SMITH, D.D., ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 87TH BIRTHDAY, OCTOBER 21ST, 1895.

O PATRIOT BARD! whose loftiest song
Shall evermore thy fame prolong,
Whose growing years, in sacred calm,
Like notes divine in holy psalm,
Are praising all things good and true,
Inspiring men to think and do, —
Long may thy harp with sweetest lays
Wreathe for thy brow the poet's bays.

True Laureate, thou, of our fair land,
Uncrowned by king or courtly hand,
Unpledged to laud some regal cause,
And seek from princelings cheap applause, —
Thou art the chosen of the free,
To sing their song of liberty,
To fill the people's homes with light,
And champion in their name the right.

No storied Abbey waits thee here,
Nor Minster's roof to shield thy bier ;
Thy grave where sturdy freemen lie,
Beneath the great Cathedral sky ;
And when that day which millions dread
Shall crown thee with the mighty dead,
Then shalt thou find, while ages roll,
A poets' corner in the soul.

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